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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Progress achieved and obstacles encountered in implementing
the social development goals and objectives of the
International Development Strategy for the Fourth United
Nations Development Decade

Report of the Secretary-General

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INTRODUCTION

1. In the period leading up to the General Assembly's adoption in 1990 of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade (resolution 45/199), the Commission for Social Development considered in extenso ways and means by which to reaffirm the fundamental importance of social goals in the development process.

2. At its thirty-first session, in 1989, the Commission agreed on a series of proposals regarding the social dimension of the forthcoming development strategy, the taking into consideration of which by the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole for the Preparation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade was subsequently recommended by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1989/55; also, the Commission decided, in its resolution 31/3, to give priority attention at its thirty-second session to two specific subjects, one of which was "the social impact of the critical economic environment on developing countries: strategies for social development cooperation". The selection by the Commission of that topic for in-depth consideration reflected, inter alia, the interest of both developed and developing countries in strengthening cooperation to achieve higher levels of living and improved social conditions in the face of new challenges for social policy (E/CN.5/1991/5, para. 2).

3. At its thirty-second session, the Commission considered strategies for social development cooperation on the basis of the report of an Expert Group Meeting (E/CN.5/1991/5, annex), organized by the United Nations and hosted by the Government of Finland.* In its report, the Expert Group identified a range of difficulties that had to be confronted, and conditions met, to increase the effectiveness of social policy interventions, particularly support by multilateral and bilateral international cooperation agencies.

4. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1991/12 on strategies for social development cooperation, inter alia, endorsed the views and suggestions contained in the report of the Expert Group; invited organizations of the United Nations system, other international organizations and Member States to review their goals and operating procedures in the light of the considerations and suggestions offered by the Expert Group; and called upon all Member States to ensure that social concerns were fully integrated in all development cooperation projects and activities. The Economic and Social Council also requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council at its substantive session of 1993, through the Commission for Social Development, on progress achieved and obstacles encountered in implementing the social

* The Meeting of the Expert Group on the Social Impact of the Critical Economic Environment on Developing Countries: Strategies for Social Development Cooperation was held at Järvenpää, Finland, from 17 to 21 September 1990.

development goals and objectives of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, and on the progress made in elaborating the suggestions and recommendations of the Expert Group. The present report is submitted in response to the request of the Economic and Social Council.

5. The International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade was adopted in 1990, just two years ago. The Secretary-General reported to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session on progress towards its implementation (A/47/270-E/1992/74). Additional information of particular interest to the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-third session and the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1993 is found elsewhere in the documentation made available to those bodies, inter alia, in the report on the implementation of the international plans and programmes of action previously agreed by the world community, to which reference is made in the Strategy. World social trends and current conditions are also reported in the Report on the World Social Situation.

6. The present report, therefore, will describe recent thinking on the nature of social development and the scope for social policy, in the context of the International Development Strategy; it will also propose several areas in which existing activities for development and international cooperation may be revised or expanded, based on the suggestions and recommendations of the Expert Group. Texts of the relevant sections of the Strategy and the Expert Group recommendations may be found in the annexes to this report.

I. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE 1990s

7. The term social development is applied to a very broad field of activities. Often, social development has meant action in the social sectors - health, education, housing, welfare services, water and sanitation facilities. Investment in those sectors was said to lead to social development. In fact, using the term social development can lead to confusion. Social development is not separate from any other type of development, and to create the impression that there can be one kind of development that is called economic and another that is called social is misleading. Instead, a multidisciplinary view of development, defined in terms of improved abilities of individuals to control their own lives, through economic, political and social action, is being increasingly preferred.

8. Activities to promote development would focus on the dynamic relations within and among societies, with the goal of improving material conditions while reducing the likelihood of social confrontation through increased opportunities for individual and community growth. Such a notion recognizes that development touches all aspects of life and all groups and classes in society; the aim of development is to benefit the entire society. While maintaining the ideal of achieving economic growth with equity and social

solidarity, this approach encourages reconsideration of the means to be utilized and the role of government in achieving the goals. In contrast with a welfarist view of social justice, which has often led to a levelling-down egalitarianism, the approach discussed in the present report gives the emphasis to levelling up through policies and intervention to enhance the capacity of low-productivity sectors, low-income segments and socially disadvantaged or vulnerable groups of the population. In a certain sense this change reflects, but also predates, the move away from the welfare state in favour of the welfare society. It indicates an awareness that within the framework of social welfare and development activities, people must be viewed as actors and not just as objects.

9. Increasingly, strategies are aiming to encourage processes and institutional change through the strengthening of people's consciousness and of their understanding of issues that affect them. The emphasis has been on the creation of conditions whereby all segments of society can improve their circumstances, and whereby people who are poor, disadvantaged or suffering discrimination can undertake positive action to improve their condition. To be effective and sustainable, activities for development must start from the perspective of the people who are expected to derive benefit from them, based on their current circumstances, their beliefs and traditions, their resources, their problems and the solutions to those problems that they believe to be acceptable.

10. This approach combines economic, political, social and cultural elements corresponding to a comprehensive definition of development. An important distinction between this perspective and that of traditional social development becomes clear. Investment in the social sectors becomes a tool for development, reflecting the presence of an educated and healthy population and workforce, which are best able to contribute to economic growth and development. There can be little argument that such investments are important and Governments should devote increasing shares of their resources to them, as conditions permit. Nevertheless, improved health, education, housing and sanitation, although they reflect development, are not sufficient or satisfactory determinants of development, as recent events in some countries indicate.

11. In recognition of these ideas, the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade is unlike its predecessors. It suggests basic principles, or conditions for development, but does not establish quantitative targets. The Strategy offers a consensus view of the areas where action is required, spelling out "an agreed understanding on the issues and challenges, the actions and the commitments, on the basis of principles for national and international action that will remain valid".

12. The Strategy stresses that "an acceleration in the rate of economic growth is an essential objective for the 1990s". It goes on to state that such growth "is a condition for expanding the resource base of the developing countries and hence for economic, technological and social transformation. But economic growth by itself does not ensure that its benefits will be

equitably distributed or that the physical environment will be protected and improved. Yet, if poverty persists or increases and there is neglect of the human condition, political and social strains will grow and endanger stability". In the Strategy, special attention is given "to the policies and measures needed in the areas of poverty alleviation, human resource development and the environment". Furthermore, the text of the Strategy states that "the decade of the 1990s must witness a significant improvement in the human condition everywhere and establish a mutually reinforcing relationship between economic growth and human welfare. The need to strengthen this relationship is, in fact, a principal theme of the present Strategy. It has not only to be reflected in national efforts but must also be promoted by the international community through financial and technical support".

13. The recognition of the fact that it is essential to strengthen the relationship between economic growth and human welfare reflects the desire to avoid separating economic and social development. It also indicates that the trickle down of benefits has proved elusive and that Governments maintain a major responsibility for ensuring the welfare of citizens, even as the precise way in which that responsibility may best be discharged changes with circumstances. A common method is being suggested, however, to the extent that Governments are encouraged to concentrate on creating environments for action, in addition to implementing specific activities. The Strategy has begun to reflect a view of development that gained support during the past decade. According to that view, how development activities (and the learning that may be induced therefrom) are conceived and implemented is as important to potential beneficiaries as what those activities promise to deliver in terms of tangible, physical improvements.

II. ELABORATING THE SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXPERT GROUP: DEVELOPMENT FROM A SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

14. Based on the work of the Expert Group (see para. 3 above) and on experience obtained through technical cooperation activities, it is possible to identify several areas in which improvements in development operations may be suggested.

A. Object of policy

15. A number of conceptual frameworks have been elaborated, including various versions within the United Nations Secretariat. All of these emphasize "the social perspective of development", with its central message that development activities should be defined in terms of their social impact. The object of development policy as implemented through various programmes and projects might (stated briefly) thus be to promote:

(a) Improved living conditions and a better quality of life for all population groups, segments of society and social strata, with an emphasis on ensuring equal opportunity, particularly between women and men;

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(b) An environment in which each individual has the possibility to advance towards his or her goals and can fully participate in defining the common goals of society and the manner of carrying out policies that affect the common welfare, without discrimination;

(c) Respect for the equal worth of each human being, and public institutions that embody this concept and can respond to the evolving needs of society and the changing aspirations of groups and individuals;

(d) A climate of reward for effort and initiative, and at the same time of protection, through public and voluntary community efforts, of the dignity and welfare of disadvantaged, vulnerable and dependent people;

(e) Cohesion in the process of change, which reconciles different individual values and aspirations and harmonizes with the physical environment, and thus remains sustainable over generations.

16. Policy must seek to create an appropriate macrocontext, taking societal structures into consideration and helping to clarify the role government chooses to take in the development process. The description of development as the strengthening of people's abilities to help themselves, which indicates a concentration on grass-roots activities, does not entail abrogation of government's vital contribution to the process. It is necessary to ensure a proper policy context: government policy must be brought to bear on support of initiative and enterprise in all spheres. It would be pointless to encourage the development of small-scale activities without seeking to improve policies that have an impact upon them. The need to simultaneously support small-scale initiatives and government intervention is not contradictory. Indeed, a two-pronged approach to development is required, that is, complementary efforts (from the top down and from the bottom up) that promote grass-roots initiatives while encouraging the top, in its decision-making, to create a climate appropriate to the nurturing of actions taken from the bottom.

17. Such ideas have helped to define more clearly the possibilities available to various actors in the development process, as well as to identify potential areas for their collaborative actions. Governments, international agencies, donors and non-governmental organizations all have important roles and functions that may sometimes appear to conflict but might more often prove to be complementary, given the proper structural arrangements and conceptual or organizing framework.

B. Tangible and intangible aspects of development

18. If development is about processes rather than attainment of physical, quantifiable goals, then promoting development involves nurturing those processes. Unfortunately, processes are usually difficult to measure and goals - such as participation, empowerment, social justice, improved understanding and ability to influence the course of events confronted - are often intangible. At the same time, development activities tend to be

concrete and specific actions, designed to provide tangible improvements. Rather than establish a paralysing contradiction, however, this situation provides an opportunity: development programmes and projects, if they are appropriately conceived and sensitively implemented, can not only produce physical improvements, but also encourage attainment of these intangible goals and lead to sustainable development.

19. This has not proved easy to accomplish. Although development literature, national development plans and project documents often refer to the importance of achieving intangible goals of development, there remains a large gap between rhetoric and reality. Steps required to reach desired goals have perhaps been unclear or have simply not been taken. Often, intangible aspects of development have been sacrificed to organizational requirements or project efficiency. In many cases, projects continue to be drawn up and implemented with little regard for their long-term impact or effectiveness.

20. For example, the importance of wide and genuinely voluntary participation in development activities is universally accepted and yet many activities continue to be designed by experts and imposed from above or outside. True participation, as distinct from the mobilization of people to carry out tasks decided from above, would require the beneficiaries of an activity to be its designers and the motivating force for its implementation.

21. The role of outsiders becomes that of encouraging and supporting local initiative, and they must retain awareness of intangible goals throughout the project cycle, so that in addition to the material benefits that accrue, there may also be a strengthening of intangible goals during project implementation. Development work is thus not simply a question of delivering services to people, but of helping them to become better agents of their own development. Progress should be measured in terms of people's increasing awareness of achieving, and desire and ability to achieve, control over their lives. Activities would seek not just to strengthen institutions, but also to increase the abilities of individuals or communities, within institutional settings, to understand, formulate, express and act upon their needs.

C. Programme and project approaches

22. The ability of international agencies and Governments to encourage intangible aspects of development may be restrained by the nature of the planning they undertake. The type of planning often called for and that they might provide - flexible, process- and learning-oriented, grass-roots-level and people-centred - is hindered by organizational and administrative requirements designed to ensure continued accountability and support. Few donors are likely to contribute to an activity that is vague about its objectives, time lines or spending requirements, nor would many recipient governments be eager to have projects funded that have no fixed objectives or that cannot claim to serve a desired purpose. Thus, over the years a system has evolved that seeks to ensure stability and accountability throughout the project cycle.

23. The exigencies of the existing project cycle tend to preclude substantial innovation. Development workers may become complacent or pressured in their work, so that the task of shepherding projects through the cycle acquires more importance than that of ensuring that projects remain appropriate to their circumstances or lead to significant improvements. The project document itself may be counter-productive. By requiring the output to be clearly defined at the time of project development, the project document in fact requires the solutions to be defined before the problems may be sufficiently understood. A learning process approach, which stresses learning by doing and allows directions to be changed according to what is learned, introduces more flexibility to the cycle but is more difficult to implement.

24. A way out of the dilemma may lie in the wider utilization of a programme approach, which has recently been the subject of renewed discussion and, indeed, has been advocated, inter alia, by the Economic and Social Council. A programme approach emphasizes strategy and policy development, and strengthening of national capacity, as well as flexibility in execution. With this approach, resources may be allocated to selected sectors but not tied to individual projects. Rather than fund a dozen different individual health projects, for example, a donor agency might establish a health fund from which money could periodically be allocated in small amounts and moved about as situations change and learning accumulates. This approach encourages decentralization of authority and a reduction in bureaucratic elements.

25. A programme approach might also encourage greater cross-sectoral collaboration among government ministries and international agencies. Programmes might be established in targeted areas, such as those of integrated rural development and urban slum upgrading, to which each ministry or agency could contribute its expertise. Other areas, such as protection of the environment or the campaign against acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), require multidimensional intervention, and could benefit from a programme approach that integrates the contributions of numerous agencies. Further discussion of the programme and project approaches will take place, and much more empirical evidence should be collected, before decisions regarding the merits of either approach can be reached. In any event, Governments and development agencies need not confront an either/or decision on programme versus project funding: some combination of the two approaches, appropriate to local needs, would make sense and at the very least it should be possible to expand the options available.

D. Decentralization

26. Currently, the prime concern of many central organizations, whether of government or international agencies, seems to be to control development activities rather than to encourage sustainable development. To the extent that it may stifle innovation, central control can be counter-productive. The objective should be to respond to changing circumstances with flexibility and to meet diverse needs with multiple responses. Decentralization of authority is a step in the right direction, and a programme approach may prove useful in increasing flexibility.

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27. Responsibility for ensuring social well-being will remain primarily with central Governments, but the implementation of programmes may be decentralized to district and local levels, or subcontracted to non-governmental organizations. While they would remain the authority of last resort in questions regarding programme implementation, central organizations could be relieved of daily responsibility for programme decisions so that they might concentrate on providing support to decentralized units and on training field staff to fulfil their increased responsibilities effectively. Central organizations should, indeed, delegate authority to the field and become primarily concerned with ensuring that the field staff have the resources, the talent and the training to carry out their tasks. Increasingly, successful and effective development activities will rely on dedicated people being allowed to proceed with their work. Countless anecdotes support the view that individual fieldworkers can have tremendous impact on development projects, perhaps even to the extent of determining their ultimate success or failure. Rather than devote themselves to the maintenance of structures and procedures for control, central administrations can improve effectiveness by focusing attention on ensuring the best selection, preparation and continuing support of those dedicated people.

28. At the same time, decentralization can help to motivate staff who might become frustrated in existing organizational structures. In many centralized organizations, where decision-making can remain strongly hierarchical and where staff can feel isolated from the results of their work, there may be little incentive or motivation for staff to ensure high quality of activities. Decentralization, by placing more responsibility in the hands of people working closer to actual conditions (where they can feel they are making concrete contributions), can serve to motivate staff and improve operations.

III. STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF A SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

29. In an effort to encourage development activities to be more effective, Governments and international agencies may review the functions of staff and encourage the evolution of many current activities. This will apply at all levels, from that of fieldworkers to those of government officials and staff of international organizations. In brief, development fieldworkers, rather than simply implement projects to provide services, should become facilitators in the development process. Their performance could be measured in terms of their abilities in working with individuals and groups to achieve the self-provision of basic human needs. Ministry personnel and staff of international agencies would become "enablers": a primary function would be to establish a climate that encourages grass-roots initiatives by developing and implementing supporting policy, by ensuring adequate resources and by working to establish forward and backward linkages through networks of organizations operating in partnership. Central authorities should assume a supporting role, which in many respects is more complex than the tasks currently being performed.

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30. The previous sections have proposed a view of development from a social perspective and suggested areas in which international organizations and Governments may wish to evaluate their operations to make them more socially sensitive, effective and sustainable. Individual organizations and Governments will develop their own approaches and adopt suggestions as appropriate to their circumstances. When doing so, they may wish to consider the comments and ideas presented below as means for strengthening development activities. The suggestions are offered primarily to ministries of social affairs or their equivalents in developing countries, to international organizations, both intergovernmental and non-governmental, and to bilateral donors. These may be the organizations that might be most interested in promoting a social perspective of development through their activities, although the ideas presented might be applied by any interested ministry or organization. Some of the activities may be new, whereas others may simply represent an extension of current responsibilities. Suggestions for activities are illustrated by the examples listed under the six headings below.

A. Social analysis

31. This activity would include making of projections based on the collection of relevant social data, clarification of current major issues of social concern, and identification and targeting of social groups requiring assistance.

32. At the local level, staff should have responsibility for gathering information, inter alia, through informal means, that can be provided to central policy makers. Channels of communication may need to be strengthened to ensure the two-way flow of information. The goals are to encourage local staff to have input into decision-making and to ensure that policy remains responsive to circumstances in the field.

33. At the national level, social analysis should be fully integrated into overall national development planning. Policies in all sectors, whether or not they are considered social, will have some social impact and that impact should be recognized and evaluated. Feedback may then be provided to sectoral ministries on their programme implementation. The ministry of social affairs or its equivalent should have sufficient input into government's overall policy development.

B. Policy development

34. Action will occur primarily at the national level, based on input from local sources, and should include the design of social strategies and policies that recognize diversity and seek it out, responding with multiple solutions. There is a tendency in politics and in policy-making to oversimplify problems and their potential solutions. Issues are generally complex and policies must respond in a multifaceted fashion while remaining flexible to changing circumstances. Programmes should be based on expanding current knowledge rather than on importing techniques or technologies.

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35. In every sector it might be possible to re-examine the traditional wisdom regarding policy development and implementation. A major goal of development policy would be to engage government to counteract inequalities in society, not by controlling economic activity but by intervening, directly and indirectly, to influence the sharing of resources and opportunities. Staff would emphasize broad-based, multisectoral solutions that are inclusive, rather than exclusive. In other words, activities should aim to involve groups currently left out of societal interaction and motivate them to participate and contribute to society. Priority should be given as much to the strengthening of the process and modes of participation as to the delivery of services.

36. To support decentralization, government, with the assistance of international agencies as requested, would set standards for the delivery of services, including the promotion of self-help activities and support for the work of non-governmental organizations. Governments and agencies would concentrate on motivating private or non-governmental efforts and overseeing their results.

C. Advocacy

37. This activity is closely linked to policy-making. There is a vital function to be performed in promoting socially sensitive decision-making and coordination of activities among ministries; a social affairs ministry can have the responsibility for providing evaluation and social feedback on the sectoral activities of other ministries or departments and, in so doing, represent the interests and concerns of groups that may need special attention or tend to be overlooked in the planning process. Such groups may include women, young people, the elderly, disabled persons, ethnic or religious minorities, migrants and refugees.

38. Advocacy can be used to promote the viewpoint and the concerns of those groups and assist them in expressing their needs and demands vis-à-vis government and international organizations. To some extent, this function may often be performed by non-governmental institutions, but their success in attracting sufficient attention and interest may be limited by their position outside government. There is scope for a natural collaboration between government and non-governmental organizations to promote social well-being.

D. Training

39. Development activities in the coming years will require increasingly workers who are both capable of communicating with local people and sensitized for recognizing the elements of traditional societies (whether those elements are social, economic or political) upon which development activities can be based.

40. At all levels, training activities and skills development could focus on identifying and enriching cross-cultural understanding, interpersonal

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communications and problem-solving skills. Training of staff in government ministries must respond to the realities of work for civil servants, including bureaucratic or administrative limits and resource constraints; if training remains theoretical, it may prove irrelevant and fail to be applied in real situations. Training for workers in the field should concentrate on providing basic skills in communication and understanding of group dynamics, as well as on teaching capacity or so-called training for trainers; it may also be necessary to provide the means to overcome traditional biases in society and to counteract the negative effects of previous development projects.

41. If central authorities are to provide adequate support for local and non-governmental providers of services, first, they need to agree with those providers on which previously centralized services will be devolved and, second, they must learn to know when and how to step back. Just as workers in the field seek to encourage growth by supporting grass-roots activities, so must central authorities recognize that their role is secondary and supportive of local initiative. Often it might be easier for development workers to usurp authority and responsibility from local groups, and for central organizations given their greater knowledge and experience as well as their contacts with the outside world, to usurp that authority and responsibility in turn. Such usurpation hinders the learning that the presence of the workers is meant to encourage, and should be avoided whenever possible.

E. Capacity-strengthening

42. As an extension of its advocacy and training roles, a ministry of social affairs might assume responsibility for raising awareness of social issues throughout government, involving undertaking of appropriate training of staff in other ministries whose work has social implications. The intention would be not only to strengthen and unify the response of government to social problems, but also to assist it in recognizing and directing appropriately its wide-ranging impact on civil society. In this activity, the ministry might receive support from international agencies or non-governmental organizations.

43. The ministry might also assist in strengthening the capacities of other organizations by serving as a clearing-house for information about ongoing activities or proposals, and by acting as broker among various government offices, international agencies and non-governmental organizations. Such activity would help to identify options, partners, resources and donor-provided aid for programme and project implementation. Thus could mutual efforts be encouraged.

F. Institutional development

44. As government and international agencies decentralize authority to local and non-governmental organizations for the delivery of services, there will remain an ongoing need to strengthen and develop those organizations. By first setting standards and then providing information, training, resources

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and other necessary assistance, government can help to ensure widespread provision of basic human needs without taking primary responsibility for the delivery of services. A certain balance must be achieved, however, so that government encourages self-help and grass-roots activities while maintaining standards. Government will find it necessary to exercise oversight responsibilities without reassuming direct involvement.

45. Throughout the course of activities undertaken, it is important that outside staff, that is, staff of central ministries or international agencies, remember to maintain a service posture: their role is not to impose on communities but to assist them in solving problems. Officials and development workers must always bear in mind that their primary role is that of catalyst for development.

IV. STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

46. A great deal of discussion has taken place, at all levels, regarding the possibilities for strengthening international cooperation for social development. Consideration has been given to the question of how to improve the structures and procedures of multilateral institutions, and discussions will be continuing at the intergovernmental level. Much attention has also been directed at the provision of bilateral assistance, in both donor and recipient countries. In the light of the information presented in the present report, the question of how international cooperation for social development might be strengthened appears under two aspects: (a) how international assistance might strengthen development from a social perspective at the country level and (b) how a social perspective might affect the programmes and operations of international agencies and donor Governments.

A. International assistance to strengthen development from a social perspective

47. Governments in developing countries may require assistance from international organizations, whether multilateral, bilateral or non-governmental, to expand and alter the selection of development options for their societies, and to implement programmes and projects in ways that encourage both tangible and intangible aspects of development. Circumstances within each country will vary and so it is counter-productive to suggest a specific approach to providing assistance. Nevertheless, some areas for potential intervention may include:

(a) Creating a policy environment that supports and encourages grass-roots development;

(b) Helping to identify intangible goals of development and assisting government to implement programmes in a way that encourages the attainment of those goals;

(c) Providing a greater percentage of assistance through programmes rather than projects, in order to encourage flexibility and make it easier to incorporate experience into activities as it is gained in the field;

(d) Offering assistance, including necessary training, to enable decentralization of authority for programmes.

B. A social perspective and its effect on international development assistance

48. An approach to development that encourages social progress can be implemented locally, nationally or internationally. Organizations responsible for assisting development activities may wish to consider the suggestions offered here, with regard to not just their programmes but also their operations. In all of their dealings with national Governments or with local groups, those organizations might remember the following points:

(a) International development assistance should remain assistance and not become direction; responsibility for activities should remain at the national level, with outsiders providing support but not determining results; and outsiders should recognize that they may have as much to learn on the subject of development activities as to teach, and should adopt an open, flexible attitude;

(b) Activities should concentrate on building local capacity; the aim of development should be to make development assistance obsolete;

(c) More flexibility should be introduced into operations so that proper and timely responses to changing conditions, needs and priorities are ensured;

(d) Increasing possibilities for greater coordination of activities among agencies should become a priority; whenever appropriate, a programme approach might be utilized, especially with regard to activities designed to address multisectoral problems;

(e) During project implementation, attention should remain focused on intangible aspects of development (such as participation, empowerment, social justice and improved understanding and ability to influence the course of events confronted) and on how they may best be promoted;

(f) Organizations might advocate, internationally, on behalf of developing countries, particularly with regard to gathering and disseminating information on conditions, needs and priorities.

49. There remains great scope for international cooperation for development. While activities and priority areas will continue to evolve with changing global conditions, it is important to solidify understanding of the nature of development and of how appropriate activities might be encouraged. The

ultimate goal is to promote development not by imposing ideas or practices from without, but by nurturing people and assisting them to improve their abilities and capacities in a sustainable manner.

Annex I

THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE FOURTH
UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT DECADE

1. The principle aim of the Strategy is to ensure that the 1990s are a decade of accelerated development in the developing countries and strengthened international cooperation. The decade should witness a significant improvement in the human condition in the developing countries and a reduction in the gap between rich and poor countries. It should be one in which ways are found for the world community to meet its needs without degrading the environment. The Strategy also has important social and political objectives. Development over the decade should enhance the participation of all men and women in economic and political life, protect cultural identities and assure to all the necessary means of survival. Each country is responsible for its own economic policies for development, in accordance with its specific situation and conditions, and for the life and well-being of all its citizens. The Strategy should help provide an environment that supports the evolution everywhere of political systems based on consent and respect for human rights, as well as social and economic rights, and of systems of justice that protect all citizens.

2. To achieve these fundamental aims six interrelated goals must be met. They are:

- (a) A surge in the pace of economic growth in the developing countries;
- (b) A development process that is responsive to social needs, seeks a significant reduction in extreme poverty, promotes the development and utilization of human resources and skills and is environmentally sound and sustainable;
- (c) An improvement of the international systems of money, finance and trade so as to support the development process;
- (d) A setting of strength and stability in the world economy and sound macroeconomic management, nationally and internationally;
- (e) A decisive strengthening of international development cooperation;
- (f) A special effort to deal with the problems of the least developed countries, the weakest among the developing countries.

3. The Strategy establishes priority aspects of development that require attention:

- (a) Eradication of poverty and hunger;

- (b) Human resource and institutional development;
- (c) Population;
- (d) Environment.

Annex II

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXPERT GROUP ON THE
SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE CRITICAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT ON
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION

1. The Meeting emphasized that the following points were particularly important:

(a) Governments and donors must ensure that the appropriate social dimension was incorporated into all stages of development activity;

(b) That approach should be reflected in the implementation of the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade;

(c) The Commission for Social Development, which had provided input for the elaboration of international development strategy, should give special attention to monitoring its implementation;

(d) Governments and donors should develop procedures to facilitate the effective participation of beneficiaries and other interested parties in project design and implementation in order to ensure that the social dimension was incorporated into all stages of development activity;

(e) Existing consultative structures, both formal and informal, should be utilized, wherever possible, in order to facilitate such effective participation;

(f) At the same time, there was a need to adapt traditional ways of bringing community influence to bear upon the decision-making process and to make better use of the capabilities of non-governmental organizations, such as cooperatives and trade unions;

(g) Governments and donors must accept that projects would increasingly require additional financial and technical inputs to ensure effective participation;

(h) Governments and donors needed to ensure that the appropriate range of professional skills were available so that an effective social input could be made into development activities; enhanced training would therefore be necessary;

(i) Donors needed to assist with funds to ensure the strengthening of planning and implementation structures in recipient countries;

(j) Governments and donors should implement programmes for the retraining and sensitization training of existing staff in order to achieve an

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appropriate level of social awareness. A high priority should be given to training in relation to gender issues;

(k) Governments and donors should ensure that all development activities were aimed at enhancing de facto equality between women and men. In particular, it was necessary to identify and tackle the constraints that inhibited women's participation, health and productivity and to improve their access to critical elements of production, services and community affairs.

2. Furthermore, in considering the large and complex area of social development and developmental social welfare, the Meeting identified themes concerning the disadvantaged and vulnerable that were of immediate concern:

(a) Research and data collection;

(b) Instruments for self-help: programmes should be designed to provide instruments enabling the disadvantaged to help themselves:

(i) Information, education and communication activities to enable individuals to utilize existing channels for their participation in development;

(ii) Assistance with organization so that the disadvantaged might unite to combine their skills;

(c) Advocacy: in concert with self-help, advocacy by others on behalf of the disadvantaged is also necessary to influence those in positions of authority and to mobilize support;

(d) Training: priority should be given to training local organizers and personnel, such as social workers, in institutions and organizations in developing countries in effective strategies and techniques to benefit the disadvantaged, and to achieve equal opportunity for all;

(e) Local responsibility: for programmes to be most effective they should start at the local level, where the community is responsible for identifying a programme of action for its disadvantaged groups. It is important for communities to be sensitized to the needs and potentials of those groups and to know how best to deal with them;

(f) State responsibility: the State has overall responsibility for the welfare of all its citizens and provides the policies and operational framework within which local initiatives take place. A practical way in which the State could be instrumental in promoting help for the disadvantaged is by stimulating programmes for people to help each other. For instance, the State might form an umbrella organization to foster and coordinate the activities of community-based organizations. Additionally, where there are gaps in services or duplication of efforts by non-governmental organizations, Governments and donor agencies should use incentives to stimulate activities towards neglected areas and/or away from others that are overserved;

(g) Social criteria: projects and social programmes designed to advance the interests of the disadvantaged should:

- (i) Reflect the social and cultural background of the society;
- (ii) Have an impact on the root causes of the problems;
- (iii) Ensure that their intended improvements are sustainable.
